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Russia Bombards Ukraine Ahead of Peace Talks, Ending Brief Energy Truce Amid Freezing Weather

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"I did call up President Putin and he's agreed" to pause strikes on Ukrainian energy infrastructure amid bitter winter weather, President Donald Trump **told reporters** on February 2.

Washington had hoped this commitment would help build momentum in negotiations to end Russia's nearly four-year-long invasion of Ukraine. But just hours after Trump's comments, Moscow caused mass blackouts with its largest missile and drone barrage so far this year.

Short-Lived Energy Truce

Russia has bombarded Ukrainian energy infrastructure every year since the war began, aiming to freeze the country into submission. Ukraine is currently enduring its hardest winter yet due to subzero temperatures, accumulated damage to infrastructure, air defense shortages, and Russian tactical and technical adaptations.

In March 2025, Moscow and Kyiv **agreed** to 30-day moratorium on strikes targeting energy infrastructure. But the U.S.-brokered deal did not last. American officials **suggested** another energy truce during trilateral peace talks in Abu Dhabi last month. Then, during a cabinet meeting on January 29, Trump **announced** that he had "personally asked President Putin not to fire on Kyiv and the [other] cities and towns for a week."

Although he said Putin had "agreed," Trump did not specify when the moratorium began. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy **said** it commenced the night after Trump's announcement. But the Kremlin later **asserted** that Putin had committed only "to refrain from striking Kyiv for a week until February 1."

Record Ballistic Missile Barrage

According to the **Ukrainian Air Force**, the onslaught on February 2 was comprised of 71 missiles and 450 drones. The Russians **struck** electricity generation and distribution infrastructure, resulting in **blackouts** in Kyiv and **other cities** in central, eastern, and southern Ukraine. The mayor of Kyiv **said** the barrage had left over 1,100 apartment buildings in the city without heat. This was Russia's "ninth large-scale attack on Ukraine's energy sector since October 2025," Ukrainian energy company **DTEK** lamented.

As Zelenskyy **noted**, the bombardment featured "a record number of ballistic missiles." Ukraine relies on its Western-supplied Patriot air defense systems to counter ballistic threats, but Kyiv lacks enough batteries to protect the whole country and has been **running low** on interceptor missiles. In recent months, Moscow has sought to exploit that shortage by intensifying its usage of Iskander ballistic missiles, having **surged production** since 2022 despite Western sanctions.

Escalation Ahead of Peace Talks

Russia launched the barrage ahead of a further round of peace talks in Abu Dhabi on February 4-5. Whereas Washington had pitched the energy truce as a confidence-building measure and a step toward de-escalation, the latest attack sent the opposite message. Zelenskyy **accused** Moscow of having "exploited the U.S. proposal to briefly halt strikes not to support diplomacy, but to stockpile missiles and wait until the coldest days of the year, when

temperatures across large parts of Ukraine drop below -20°C (-4°F)."

The attack came as the Kremlin continues to condition peace on its maximalist demands. The Trump administration has leaned on Kyiv to make territorial concessions, **asserting** that surrendering the rest of Ukraine's eastern Donbas region would satisfy Putin. But **Moscow** has poured **cold water** on that notion. The Kremlin **insists** that Kyiv must also formally abandon its NATO aspirations, demilitarize, and adopt legal protections for Russian cultural influence in Ukraine. Moscow also rejects the Western vision for **security guarantees** for Ukraine. Ultimately, Putin aims to make Ukraine a vassal state and rewrite the broader security order in Europe.

To help Ukraine get through the winter, the Trump administration should maximize deliveries of air defense munitions to Ukraine. Washington should also clarify whether Moscow violated the terms of the energy truce. If so, Russia should face consequences, which could include **additional sanctions**. Either way, the White House needs to be more clear-eyed about Putin's ambitions and make Russia, not Ukraine, the **focus** of U.S. pressure.

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